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BEETHOVEN'S *F* MINOR SONATA.

Translated from the German of A. B. Marx, by A. E. KROEGER.

[The following characteristic of one of Beethoven's most admired sonatas for the pianoforte is taken from MARX's *Life and Works of Beethoven*.]

## THE FIRST MOVEMENT, OR ALLEGRO ASSAI.

It is a night picture, sombre, scarcely perceivable, wildly agitated by storms, scarcely for a moment lit up by the pale light of the moon. Until this sonata was written Beethoven had never created anything so ghostly, weird and sphynx-like, nor has he since. It flies away before our mind like a wild tempestuous dream, and yet impresses upon us all its features, never to be forgotten. Was it a dream of the infernal regions into which the earth-ridden soul descended for a moment? Who can say? Perhaps not even Beethoven himself.

The very first theme of the first movement, *allegro assai*, floats weird-like and hollow-sounding upwards as if questioning for something, repeating itself in a still sharper manner on the half-note higher tone. But what are those four tones in the bass—D flat, D flat, D flat, C—that seem to interrupt the question warningly and as if beckoning, until the theme of the question rushes up again like lightning, and plunges down and whirls upward again, repeating the question?

You may take these suggestions, which uncalled for I append to the naked fact of the notes, for chimeras. Of course, I can prove nothing. But the wildest of all chimeras it would be to compose such tone-pictures, unless an internally ruling thought had called them forth. If they were mere play of tones, the most commonplace composition were preferable, for this movement is even technically objectionable, since the first theme finds no counter theme, and since the second *motivo*—D flat, D flat, D flat, C—has no warrant in the first. This is neither technically correct, nor in Beethoven's manner.

The same theme is repeated, beginning softly, but immediately attracting a clanging falling in of the harmony, three times interrupted with fury, when quick as lightning all the tones concentrate upon E flat, waiting there upon frightened chords, that nevertheless have a sound of awakening hope in

them, until—it all passes with fearful speed—there arises upon the dimly-lit depth of the tottering world of fog a beautiful chant (36th measure), which, however, soon after its recommencement, is interrupted by painful tones. Were those the voices of spirits from Elysium, which the cruel mythology of the Greeks has located so near the Tartarus? Who knows? To the friend of the Greeks such ideas were near enough at hand.

Whatever you may assume, from these sounds the tones rush down to a second, hard-knotted theme, moving anxiously in the depth, then again floating in terror to a higher point, while the bass climbs up and breaks out in those very tones which interrupted the first question in so solemn and threatening a manner. With this second theme—in *A* flat—the whole movement first gains fixed connection and consistency; the concluding measures end the matter abruptly, the bass having become the ruling voice sinks down to the lowest depth, there dying off under the trembling tones of the treble that echo away in the highest octave.

Such is the first part of the first movement of this Sonata, and here we pause to take a glance at the whole.

There is clearly not a feature in the whole first movement that does not closely correspond with what we have suggested to be characterized in this first part; from the first beginning—where the reposing *A* flat, changed into *G* sharp, leads to the milder key of *E* major, giving the soul a chance to breathe again as if half awakening from a fearful dream—to the painfully winding quintolet passages and thence to those weird four tones which finally in the third part of the first movement, where, under the chief theme, they keep knocking and complaining and threatening, become almost haunting ghosts, shrieking, “*Eternally damned!*”

Let this suffice for those who find therein a trace of the mind that built up the composition. For the others I have already said too much.

But it is certainly allowable—even if we look away from all fixed interpretation—to call this first movement of the Sonata fantastic. Being built upon the chief theme in hollow double octaves, the repetition of the theme in an utterly foreign key (*G* flat major following *F* minor) instead of a counter-theme,

the *externally* utterly unjustified mixing up of that quite foreign D flat, D flat, D flat, C, the equally abrupt up and down rushing of the sixteenths'-passages, and the renewed breaking off with a sort of half-conclusion on the dominant, the repetition of the chief theme for a third time without a counter-theme—all this contributes to fix the fantastic character of the movement, at least up to the second theme.

But still more. At first the second theme was quite normal in the parallel of the chief key in A flat major. But the second time it changes this into A flat minor, so that Beethoven, having once resolved to let minor follow minor, went, moreover, and took, instead of the nearest dominant, C minor, a far removed key.

We have called this movement fantastic. Fantastic is whatsoever shows itself to be foreign to the usual connection of our thinking—as, for instance, every notion of a spirit-world, since we can form no definite and accurate conception of it. It indicates one of the highest tensions of the imagination, one of the most important spheres of art, which even here touches the infinité. True, the same line is also the limit of insanity and illusion. Now, it is very remarkable in Beethoven, that no musician had the gift of fantasy to such a degree as he; but no one also has been so able to control and tame that gift, so that, of all forms of composition, he liked least of all the form of a fantasia. This duplicity of the gift and the talent to control it shows itself nowhere clearer than in the F minor sonata. Look at the contents as you will, they appear fantastic. But from the very end of the first part the contents are forced to submit themselves to the tight reins held in the hands of the master, who precisely thereby proves himself master, and they so submit without losing their character. Those fantastic images are given in the first part. Now they live and move after natural laws.

At the conclusion of the first part the chief theme re-enters, but in E major, moving monodically in octaves, and not any more in hollow double-octaves. But the major key cannot be long retained, from the very nature of the composition, and hence changes into E minor, in which key the chief theme is led upward from the bass, accompanied by a trembling treble, and thus accompanied—that is, steadied—for the first

time. Thence the bass amidst those torturing quintolet passages returns back to the depths, whilst the treble leads the theme up to the highest G. Thence both treble and bass move in the same manner, but in other keys, until this whole theme comes to rest on the dominant of D flat major; on which key the second theme of the second part enters. This is a repetition of the second theme of the first part, but in a broadened and changed elaboration. This whole second part may indeed be called a repetition of the first part, but with a thorough change of the elaboration of the contents.

The same thing may be said of the third part of the first movement; which third part indeed, usually, is essentially a repetition of the first part.

But to this third part, or rather to the whole, there follows an appendix. Again the chief theme forms itself in F minor, and rises from the lowest depths, under a treble moving in sixths, upwards, where it changes into D flat major, and receives there the reply of the treble—the same chant, hearing which we ventured to think of the Elysian fields. We follow this movement no further. Everywhere we have seen the firmest, manliest control of the most fantastical contents ever conceived by Beethoven.

#### THE SECOND MOVEMENT, OR ANDANTE.

The second movement we may call a *De profundis clamavi ad Te*. An earnest, simple chant, scarcely moving, and, like the upward glance of silent devotion, forms itself over a deep, solitary bass—the depth continuing from out of the night vision of the first movement. The repetition of the chant—for there are variations, not of a merely formal character, however, but thoroughly spiritual—sunders both voices still more distinctly—the upper tones chanting hesitatingly and in an interrupted way, the bass tones following falteringly. The next variation lifts the chant mildly and comfortingly upward into clearer regions; and in the following variation the chant, now accompanied by harp-passages, seems to try to ascend even to the most ethereal heights. From these supreme regions the tones suddenly return to the first depth, then move back to the central region, where, as they echo away, a sharp transition hurries us into the finale.

## THE THIRD MOVEMENT, OR ALLEGRO AND PRESTO.

This finale, Ries tells us, was conceived by Beethoven on one of those wild rambles when the composer used to forget the world about him and himself in the impetuous storm of his thoughts. And a storm-night it surely is, whirling along without stop, like that wild night wherein King Lear exposed his tortured venerable head to the winds and the lashing rain. Beethoven had returned from his ramble with a tempest raging in his breast, but this finale fixed in his mind in its defiant storm-march movement (*presto*), as the proper, though utterly unexpected, conclusion of his great work, leaving it to work out its storm-movement musically as it might.

Yes, this finale is a storm-night and creates night-visions—as probably everyone who has heard this tempestuous *presto* has experienced within himself—weird as those that came upon the soul of the lonely singer who composed it. The legend says that the cheeks of those who have seen spirits retain forever the paleness of terror. Thus, after the demonic vision of the first movement of the Sonata, peace and gladness could not return. That chant, “From the depths do I call unto Thee,” might stretch up to listen unto sounds from heaven, but it could not escape the anxious life of earth and its breathless haste; the unquieted woe of earth grasps it, and with repeated blows fastens itself deep and wounding into the heart.

And now begins that tempest, which had arisen in the consciousness of the singer on that fearful night, high in the treble and quite softly—just as the wind announces its coming in the highest branches of the forest—sweeping down and raging with fury in the bass. It never ceases; but in the twentieth measure it becomes, as is proper, a secondary matter—*symbolic* of the deep-inward ever-restless and stormy soul. And as a true man, in the inner as well as outer storms of life, first takes firm hold of himself and “plants himself down square,” so Beethoven, above all, first places himself storm-secure (from twentieth to twenty-ninth measure), and only then begins to breathe forth his chant of the storm into the wild tempest of the night.

It is not of importance *what* he sings, but *that* he sings and

lives and stands firm in unbroken courage is the part that tells. Hence Beethoven soon drops that chant in order to sing the genuine song, that which he held valid throughout his life (from thirty-sixth to fiftieth measure)—“Upwards through tempest and night.” This is the song he sings. The storm never ceases, and his courage never permits itself to be broken, although in the whirl of the tempest the heart at one time threatens to succumb, and complains and sobs; and at one time everything—inner and outer storms—sinks away into breathless quiet.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHILOSOPHY.

### PREFACE.

In the first and second volumes of this Journal I published in ten chapters an “Introduction to Philosophy,” designing therein to present in the simplest form certain fundamental insights (*aperçues*) which light the way to the purely speculative. These were not given in any strict order, but each chapter endeavored to start *de novo*, and to develop out of some common view the underlying speculative basis.

It is now proposed, in a series of chapters, to unfold a more systematic view of the totality which the speculative insight discloses to us as the truth of the Phenomenal world. This would be a genetic deduction of the categories of Pure Reason such as Hegel has attempted (successfully) in his Logic. In it would appear the frame-work of the MACROCOSM; and as the so-called “*Microcosm*” is “made in its image,” or, in other words, since the human mind is potentially the complete manifestation of the Reason which creates the World, it is necessary that a complete statement should show the psychological side to the Ontology which such a Logic furnishes. I shall therefore introduce at the beginning, and at certain stages of the progress, entire chapters devoted exclusively to making clear certain important psychological distinctions.

Besides the subjective aspect which must be removed from pure thought by a careful consideration of Psychology, there is a source of difficulty still more formidable: *historical complication*. It arises from the fact that the form of